

**To:** Simon, Verneta[[simon.verneta@epa.gov](mailto:simon.verneta@epa.gov)]; Cantello, Nicole[[cantello.nicole@epa.gov](mailto:cantello.nicole@epa.gov)]; uylaine@frontier.com[[uylaine@frontier.com](mailto:uylaine@frontier.com)]  
**From:** **Personal Email/Ex. 6**  
**Sent:** Wed 8/12/2015 9:46:51 PM  
**Subject:** EPA plans probes into Colo. mine waste spill

# EPA plans probes into Colo. mine waste spill

By [Timothy Cama](#) - 08/12/15 05:15 PM EDT

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is planning both an internal and outside investigation into how agency contractors caused a spill of 3 million gallons of mine waste in Colorado.

The agency hopes to figure out the root cause of the spill into the Animas River near Silverton last week, how to prevent such accidents in the future and how to better respond, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said Wednesday.

## ADVERTISEMENT

"We are doing an internal EPA investigation, and we're also going to seek independent review and investigation of what happened," McCarthy told reporters in Durango, Colo., after visiting with EPA, local, state and tribal officials working to respond to the massive spill.

"Rest assured that we will learn lessons from this and we will move those lessons forward in the work moving ahead," she said.

McCarthy said that the external probe, the details of which will be revealed later, will help the agency and the public feel more at ease about the findings.

"It is not a 'trust me' situation," she said. "People know that EPA had an incident occur, they want to have fresh eyes that are independent of EPA on it, and I want those fresh eyes as much as you do."

The House Oversight Committee is also asking the EPA's inspector general to conduct its own probe.

In the meantime, McCarthy has instructed the entire agency to stop any assessment activities in abandoned mines, unless it presents imminent risk, in an effort to prevent additional spills.

McCarthy's visit to Durango, which is on the Animas and the closest major city to the abandoned Gold King Mine, came after a week of anger and confusion among local and state officials toward the EPA.

McCarthy revealed at the Wednesday afternoon news conference that the EPA's testing of the Animas River came to a similar [conclusion](#) as Tuesday's data from state scientists: the water had returned to pre-spill concentrations of metal and acidity.

But she cautioned that the EPA is not ready to declare that the river is safe.

"This is very good news. But I want to make sure you understand that there are additional steps that we want to take ... working with our counties and local communities, so that they can have a chance to review this data thoroughly," she said.

Earlier Wednesday, House Oversight Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) asked that the EPA's inspector general conduct its own probe.

"An independent perspective is essential to investigating the cause of and response to this catastrophe,"

Chaffetz wrote, adding that the EPA promised a thorough investigation of the Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010 and that "the EPA should be held to the same benchmark that applies to those it regulates."

Joining Chaffetz in his letter were Reps. Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.) and Ken Buck (R-Colo.).

Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.), Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas) and other lawmakers have similarly pledged to hold the EPA's feet to the fire for the incident.